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ABSTRACT

When directors of forensics stop coaching and travelling with their teams, they often seek other roles to enable them to continue their affiliation with forensic activities. A closer look at five commonly held assumptions about the motivation of ex-directors shows that: (1) after active coaching ends, ex-directors do take on different roles in forensics; (2) ex-directors usually want to maintain contact with forensics; (3) directors cannot perform all tasks as effectively as they would like, so they often wait until after active coaching to pursue different roles; (4) forensic administration is actually not different after active coaching ends; and (5) active coaching is often the "villain" forcing directors out of the activity. There are benefits in having the "non-travelling" director function as an administrator. Ex-directors can assist the coach by assuming responsibility for planning, organizing, leading, and controlling the program, and for increasing support for forensics among other faculty. Forensics suffers significantly when forensics directors, with their years of experience, disappear from the activity after active coaching ends. Directors being able to continue involvement without travelling or coaching offers three benefits to the activity: delegating management to ex-directors allows more time for coaches to work with students; programs could enjoy institutional stability by having a liaison; and additional support for the program could be garnered through regular contacts with representatives from the business and professional community. (PRA)

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THE EX-DIRECTOR AS A FORENSICS ADMINISTRATOR

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This paper was presented as part of a program entitled, "Metamorphosis: What Roles Do Forensic Directors Take On After Active Coaching Ends?" sponsored by Pi Kappa Delta at the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association, held in Atlanta, GA, October 31 through November 3, 1991. The author wishes to thank Dr. Harriette S. McCaul and Dr. Timothy L. Sellnow for their helpful suggestions in the conception and completion of this paper.

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ABSTRACT

When Directors of Forensics stop coaching and travelling with their teams, they often seek other roles to enable them to continue their affiliation with forensic activities. This paper suggests that the ex-Director can play a role as a forensic administrator, and assist the active coach by assuming responsibility for planning, organizing, leading, and controlling the program.

Five assumptions are discussed which question the motivation of the ex-Director and subsequent responses from the forensic community when ex-Directors seek to continue to be a part of the activity after they have "retired" from active coaching.

THE EX-DIRECTOR AS A FORENSICS ADMINISTRATOR

Generally, when individuals become involved in any activity or organization, they either like what the group does or they like the people who are associated with the group. Involvement in forensic activity adheres to this perspective. Forensic coaches often regard forensics as desirable and satisfying because they like the activity (the excitement of competition, leading organizations, running tournaments) and they like the people who are involved in forensics (the social relationships with other coaches, the student-coach relationships).

Perhaps forensic coaches are a bit like entrepreneurs. It is not uncommon for coaches to seek positions where they can, more or less, be their own bosses; "stake their claims," and prove to themselves and their peers that they can do and have it all--teach, publish, lead forensic organizations, function as a mentor for their students, and administer programs--as Directors of Forensics.

Operationally, most people who work in forensics or forensic education have an understanding what being a Director of Forensics entails. However, on many campuses, the Director of Forensics position is not clearly defined. Expectations on the part of college or university administrators may vary regarding teaching assignments, travel requirements, research productivity, involvement in national professional organizations, and service as a mentor to students and other forensic directors in the state or region. As a result of the ambiguity associated with the role of a forensics director, individuals who are hired to direct programs and coach students often become overburdened and eventually seek either a non-forensic position or a way to reduce the amount of time associated with their commitment to forensics.

The question posed by this panel is: What roles do forensic directors take on after active coaching ends? In the business world, this might be considered as the shift from employment to retirement. Just as in the business community where some individuals struggle with coping with retirement, so to in the forensic community, ex-Directors struggle with the role or roles they might play, as they seek to continue their affiliation with the activity which, for many years in their lives,

provided professional and personal satisfaction. The implication of this question is that there must be a transition, or metamorphosis from that of "super-director" to a "different role" or no role for all forensic coaches. Realistically, the luxury of having more than one or two faculty positions at any given school assigned to forensics is rare (Littlefield, 1991). However, in programs where people are interested in continuing their association with forensics through other roles, there may be an opportunity for the Director of Forensics not to be the head coach; but rather, the forensic administrator.

Before beginning a discussion of the ex-director as a forensic administrator, there are a few assumptions that I would like to address:

Assumption #1: After active coaching ends, ex-Directors of Forensics take on different roles enabling them to continue their involvement in forensics. Response: True.

Serving as a Director of Forensics is very challenging and time-intensive. The roles suggested earlier were not exaggerated. There is an expectation, and we may have bought into it as forensic coaches, that to be regarded as successful, one needs to do it all. This means teaching, coaching, travelling, publishing, managing, mentoring, and leading. Somehow, by doing all of these things, and doing them well, coaches establish themselves as "legitimate" Directors of Forensics. While this may seem somewhat elitist, the pressure to succeed is real and felt by many coaches. One need only listen to the comments made by some on "the circuit" in some regions of the country to verify this tendency; for example: "He doesn't travel, so how can he know what makes a good oration these days?"; "she doesn't know anything about interp so how can she judge it?"; or "how many papers has she presented or published?" If Directors of Forensics wish to counter these remarks, they need evidence to suggest the contrary. The pressure to perform all roles for an extended period of time can cause stress and lead to what is commonly referred to as "burnout." The forensic community has yet to subscribe to a "wellness paradigm" that helps coaches to manage their stressors more effectively, so at some point in time, "retirement" comes with a sense of relief and remorse. While some ex-Directors quietly don the slippers of the more traditional faculty member without looking back, this assumption suggests that the "remorse" felt by some, as a result of the disassociation with forensic activities and the people who

were involved, causes ex-Directors to find different roles, enabling them to continue their affiliation with forensics, without having to perform all of the roles previously assigned to them as Directors of Forensics. Even if an ex-Director decides not to participate in any way with forensic activities, this in itself is a role; the role of the uninvolved bystander.

Assumption #2: Ex-Directors of Forensics want to maintain contact with forensics. Response: True and False.

Carrying the "have it all" philosophy along, many Directors of Forensics find that at some point, they can no longer practice what they had been preaching. Either due to changes in relationships (e.g., marriage, divorce) or the additional responsibilities that children may bring to a relationship, or to the pressures of publishing more research, or additional college or university responsibilities; at some point, something must "give." The result may be that the Director can no longer travel with the team. This paper suggests that the ex-Director can be an administrator of forensic programs and tournaments without travelling.

There is, of course, the notion that deep down, ex-Directors may not want to maintain contact with forensics for a variety of reasons. However, because they built much of their professional reputation upon their relationship with forensic activities, they feel compelled to portray themselves as committed to the activity. If insincere, this mask doesn't take long to crack; and once exposed these ex-Directors slip into retirement.

Assumption #3: Directors of Forensics cannot perform all tasks required of them as effectively as they would like; so they wait until active coaching ends to pursue different roles. Response: True and False.

Although Madison Avenue has portrayed the successful person as a "super human," most Directors of Forensics are not able to deal with all of the pressures to teach, publish, coach, travel, mentor, administer, and lead. Operationally, for many, involvement in forensics means focusing on one aspect of the activity. Some are great coaches but cannot run tournaments; some are great organizers of tournaments but cannot coach debate; some are capable scholars but do not function well as leaders in professional organizations. An option available for Directors of Forensics is to do what they can, as well as they can, but to wait until after they "retire" from active coaching to pursue

different roles. For these individuals, waiting until they have finished active coaching to publish some research materials may be a realistic option. Serving as a leader in forensic organizations may not be possible for the single coach who maintains a twenty-tournament season in individual events or debate. However, following retirement from active coaching, this same coach may find service in a leadership role to be rewarding.

There are some who say that it is impossible to label as "discrete" the roles played by a forensic director. Similarly, there are those who suggest that one doesn't have to perform all roles in order to be regarded as an active professional in the area of forensics. Waiting until one is finished with the active coaching and travelling does not mean that the doors to leadership in forensic organizations will automatically open; nor does it mean that suddenly all manuscripts submitted will be published by the professional forensic journals. However, the time to assume new roles may exist once active coaching and travelling is reduced or eliminated.

Assumption #4: Forensic Administration is different after active coaching ends. Response: False.

While this paper suggests that an ex-Director can be a forensic administrator after leaving the ranks of "active coaching," the assumption that the administration of forensic activities somehow changes after coaching ends is not valid. A forensic administrator must deal with recruitment and retention of team members; budget control and management; professional affiliation and development; planning, organizing, leading, controlling, coordinating, motivating, and evaluating; as well as running tournaments, workshops, and clinics. The only major difference between an active Director of Forensics and an ex-Director, when dealing with the aforementioned issues, might be the number of years of experience involved. The experience factor may make the ex-Director more adept at managing the on-campus forces that often cause aggravation for the active coach trying to keep the squad moving forward while juggling teaching and other departmental responsibilities. However, the skills required to administer programs are needed by the Director of Forensics. Waiting to demonstrate forensic management skills until after retiring from active coaching is not realistic option for most ex-Directors.

Assumption #5: Active coaching is the "villain." Response: True and False.

To be a "real" coach, many suggest that one must travel with the team. While travelling can give insight, constant trips can wear a coach out. The length of the forensic season does nothing to enable the coach to prolong his or her involvement in the activity. At some point, the coach finally turns in the van keys and says, "I'm not going to travel any more. My time as a forensic director is at an end." The torch passes to a new, perhaps less seasoned generation; and life goes on. The retired coach says that the travelling finally got to be too much. The sad part about this scenario is that unless the ex-Director assumes a new role, most contact with forensics and with the people that were involved in the activity is limited, if not ended. The villain--active coaching--wins the contest; the ex-Director--metamorphosized--loses what once provided satisfaction and fulfillment.

There is another perspective. If the option of finding a new role in forensic activities exists for ex-Directors, then assumption #2 might be at work--ex-Directors don't want to continue their involvement in forensics after active coaching ends.

The Ex-Director as a Forensic Administrator

These assumptions provide a useful context for the following discussion of the role of an ex-Director as a forensic administrator. Initially, for this metamorphosis to occur, the forensic staff at any institution needs to be comfortable with different titles than they might prefer. If ex-Directors continue as forensic administrators, most likely, they will retain the title of Director of Forensics. The active coaches either assume assistant or associate director status and tend to "travel" with the team in order to keep their perceived "legitimacy" on the circuit. Another option labels these middle managers who serve as a conduit for information "flowing back and forth between executives [forensic administrators] and operatives [student team members]" (Danowski, p. 390) as "head coaches," with the forensic administrator functioning in much the same way as does an athletic director who schedules and manages a school's program without coaching.

There are benefits in having the ex-Director or "non-travelling" director function as the administrator of forensic programs, because administration is often seen as "the burden"; coaches like

to be on the circuit where they are close to the pulse of what is happening with other coaches and competitors.

In business, management is viewed as "the attainment of organizational goals in an effective and efficient manner through planning, organizing, leading, and controlling organizational resources" (Daft, 5). Each of these functions can be applied to forensic administration. Planning is needed to define goals for the team and to decide how to use the available resources to reach the goals. Organization is important when assigning tasks, delegating responsibility to students and assistant coaches or graduate assistants. Administrators must be leaders, motivating students to attain their personal and team goals; and controllers as they monitor student performance and behavior, and help to keep the program/team moving forward. As forensic administrators fulfill these functions, they operate on many levels that include the environment, a suprasystem, and the system (Conrad, 135). The environment might be defined as higher education, the suprasystem as forensic activity, and the system being individual forensic contests.

Similarly, Daft (1991) identified ten managerial roles adapted from Henry Mintzberg's book entitled, The Nature of Managerial Work, that can be compared with those played by forensic administrators, including: Figurehead, leader, liaison, monitor, disseminator, spokesperson, entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator (p. 20). While these roles help to explain the kinds of activities a forensic administrator might undertake, they are not unique to the ex-Director. Rather, they are also roles played by "active coaches" who serve as Directors of Forensics.

A few of the specific benefits from having ex-Directors serving as forensic administrators include: (1) Having more time to spend on administrative functions; (2) providing institutional stability; and (3) helping to increase support among the faculty for forensics.

More time for administrative functions

As university administrators increase their scrutiny of programs at every level, forensic activities are being pressured for accountability. Budget control and maintenance is an on-going concern. Planning for trips, arranging for transportation, drawing registration and judging fees,

keeping track of receipts, and submitting and defending annual budgets before student groups or local administrators is time-intensive. Those who have observed Directors of Forensics, or served as one, can quickly see an advantage from having more time to devote to students who are preparing for competition.

Another function of the forensic administrator involves correspondence with future students in an effort to recruit them into the program. While the head coach should be a part of the recruitment process, the coordination of these efforts can be managed quite effectively by forensic administrators without sacrificing the personal, persuasive communication that a "head coach" might provide. Running tournaments, workshops, and clinics is normally associated with job descriptions for Directors of Forensics. Making on-campus arrangements for rooms, locating local judges, ordering trophies, sending out invitations and scheduling the contestants can be done by forensic administrators. The benefit for the coaches and students comes from the increased coaching time available. In short, if the ex-Director is going to maintain a relationship with a forensic program, helping with the administrative tasks can reduce stress on the head coaches and provide a very meaningful contribution to the success of the program.

Institutional Stability

On many campuses, the Director of Forensics position is permanent and tenure-track. If not, justification for creating such positions has been articulated by participants at both the First and Second Developmental Conferences on Forensics. In situations where tenure exists, there is an inherent stability associated with the position. However, on other campuses where this is not the case, having the ex-Director remain affiliated as a forensic administrator can be helpful in providing an historical perspective for student groups who decide how student activity fees are to be allocated. The ex-Director also knows the major players in the institutional context and can communicate with them about issues of importance to the program. If the head coaches are not available because they are working with students or travelling, or new to the system, the ex-Director can continue to be accessible to University and student groups. Rather than reestablishing relationships every time new Directors

come to campus, the ex-Director can provide the stability a forensic program needs when undergoing the scrutiny of administrators.

Increasing support for forensics

Finally, the ex-Director can be instrumental in increasing support for forensics among the other faculty and staff in a department, college or university. Speaking from experience, ex-Directors can be advocates for the active coaches who are often busy coaching or travelling with the team. They can answer questions and defend programs. Ex-Directors can also be role models for other faculty, in that they can continue to promote and support forensic activities, even though they no longer travel with teams.

On another level, having the ex-Director available as a forensic administrator can be beneficial if a program is seeking support in the form of scholarships for team members. The ex-Director can meet with representatives from business, industry, the legal system, medical centers, and Chambers of Commerce (to name just a few) to promote the program and generate scholarships. Time simply is not available for travelling coaches to take on this additional burden; and consequently, possible scholarship sources go unattended. If the forensic administrator is truly a liaison, spokesperson, and entrepreneur, the ability to generate support for a forensic program makes the ex-Director an important "player" on the team.

Conclusion

Somehow it doesn't seem fair that a Director of Forensics has to disappear from the activity after active coaching ends. The level of experience lost when this disappearance occurs cannot be measured. The activity suffers significantly. Being able to continue involvement without travelling or coaching is one way ex-Directors can play a part in the on-going success of a forensic program. This paper suggested that three benefits can occur: More time would available for coaches to work with their students if they did not have to allocate time to management issues; the programs could enjoy institutional stability by having a person with knowledge of context and individuals serve as a liaison; and additional support for the program could be garnered through regular contacts with representatives

from the business and professional community. If we value our activity, we need to explore ways in which we can create opportunities for those interested in remaining involved to do so.

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